



Looking Back on the Blue Ribbon Award

Voice

Diane Hathaway, Regional Superintendent, Philadelphia Public Schools (Principal of 2006 Blue Ribbon School)

The spirit of this day will live with you forever. I recently got a new job, and I have thirty schools—five have made Adequate Yearly Progress, and twenty-five have not. And the twenty-five that have not, it's not that they're anywhere even near AYP. There are some of my schools that have a score of nine or ten. I fully expected to be in the same region where my school was to become a regional superintendent, which is a very successful region, but because of winning this award [laughter], I was sent to another part of city!

And I thought, you know, "Oh my God, what am I going to do with these twenty-five schools?" Because when you're successful, you don't really get to see the other part of what struggling schools look like. And I think when I visited every one of those schools I kept saying the same thing: "Oh my goodness, oh my goodness, what am I going to do?" And last year I happened to come here to Washington and went for a walk, and was walking down the street, and I came to the site where I got my Blue Ribbon, which is not the same hotel as this. And I thought, "I'm going to go in there." And I went into the hotel, and down into the area where we had our dinner and received our award, and I tell you, the spirit of that day was still there with me. And I said, "Maybe I can just breathe in all of this success" and bring that back to Philadelphia with me.

Because there is a certain responsibility to, I think, to teach others, and to show others what excellence looks like. Because in this room, you're all schools of excellence, but think of number of people that are not here and they need those examples of excellence. So last year, one of the things I did do was to take all thirty of those schools to my school. And I thought, "Oh, I hope they don't think I'm being cocky, sending them all there." But every one of those principals when they came back thanked me and said, "Now I know what it looks like. I know what excellence looks like and I have something to strive for. And I know that it can be done." So I think that as a winner, you have that responsibility to share your success with your community, to reach out to others, and even if they don't ask to come, to invite people to come.

And then, I think also, to let people know that it was not easy. It's hard. It's really hard, dedicated work. So this year—I started my job last year, in the middle of the year—this year we started with an address that's on our public network, and I used Outward Bound. And the motto of Outward Bound is, *to serve, to strive, and not to yield*. And all of you, I am sure, even though this was not your motto, have come to this somewhat intrinsically, that this is what it takes. You are there to serve, you strive, you work hard, and you don't give up. And that's what it takes to be a Blue Ribbon School.